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St. Helena

Working paper prepared by the Secretariat

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I. General

1. St. Helena, which is a Non-Self-Governing Territory administered by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, consists of the island of St. Helena and two others: the island of Ascension and several small islands forming the Tristan da Cunha group.

2. Situated in the South Atlantic Ocean, approximately 1,900 kilometres from Angola and 2,900 kilometres from Brazil, St. Helena is a small island of volcanic origin. The island, where the Territory's capital, Jamestown, is located, is the largest of the islands of the Territory, with an area of 122 square kilometres. Ascension lies 1,200 kilometres to the north-west of St. Helena, and Tristan da Cunha and the other small islands lie approximately 2,400 kilometres to the south. The Territory comprises a total land area of 412 square kilometres. Climatically the islands are different; while Ascension enjoys a tropical climate, St. Helena's is subtropical tempered by trade winds that blow throughout the year. The climate of Tristan da Cunha, further south, is marine subtropical with small differences between summer and winter and between day and night. They have distinctive flora and fauna, with many rare or endangered species.

3. The uninhabited island of St. Helena was discovered in 1502 by the Portuguese navigator Juan da Nova. In 1633 the Netherlands claimed the island but did not occupy it. In the wake of a charter from the Lord Protector of Britain in 1657, later consolidated by a Royal Charter issued by King George II in 1661, the British East India Company proceeded in 1658 to colonize and fortify the island, which was subsequently settled by the English. Slaves were brought from Africa, Madagascar and the Far East. Chinese and some Indian indentured labourers were brought to work on the island. Napoleon Bonaparte was exiled to St. Helena from 1815 until his death in 1821. St. Helena became a British Crown Colony in 1834.

4. The inhabitants of St. Helena are known as "'Saints" or "'St. Helenians".[1] A population census conducted in February 2008 counted the provisional de facto population at 4,077, compared to 5,008 in 1998. Following the reintroduction of granting of British citizenship to Saints in 2002, the island experienced a wave of exodus which subsequently slowed down.[1] It remains to be seen how emigration patterns might be affected by the outcome of ongoing deliberations on a possible airport.

5. Another problem facing St. Helena is that the majority of Saints returning to settle on the islands are of retirement age, thus exacerbating the already heavily skewed age profile of the population. Approximately 17 per cent of the population resides in Jamestown. The official language of St. Helena is English.[1]

II. Constitutional, legal and political developments

6. The previous report (A/AC.109/2009/5, para. 13) recorded developments towards the replacement of the St. Helena Constitution Order, 1988. A new

Note: The information contained in the present paper has been derived from published sources, including those of the territorial Government, and from information transmitted to the Secretary-General by the administering Power under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations.

[1] Information provided by the administering Power, 29 December 2009.

Constitution was enacted in the St. Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha Constitution Order 2009 and entered into force on 1 September 2009. The new Order changes the name of the territory from "St. Helena and its Dependencies" to "St. Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha". As previously, executive Authority is vested in Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, but is exercised on her behalf by the Governor, who is appointed by the United Kingdom Government. However, the ability of the Governor to act inconsistently with the wishes of elected Councillors is curtailed in comparison with the previous constitution, entrusting more power to elected local Councillors. Symbolically, the Governor will no longer hold the title "Commander in Chief".[2] The Constitution also now provides protection for fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual. The current Governor is Andrew Gurr.

7. The Legislative Council comprises the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker, three ex officio members (the Chief Secretary, the Financial Secretary and the Attorney General) and 12 elected members. The Executive Council, which is presided over by the Governor, consists of the ex officio members and five of the elected members of the Legislative Council. The ex officio members have no vote in either body (whereas previously the Chief Secretary and Financial Secretary were voting members).

8. Elections are held by secret ballot, at intervals of not more than four years, by universal suffrage for those aged 18 years and over. The latest general elections were held on 4 November 2009, when a total of 25 candidates were nominated, divided between two constituencies; 12 (6 for each constituency) were duly elected; the new Legislative Council met formally on 13 November and elected the 5 elected members of the Executive Council and chairmen for each of eight Council Committees. The Council is due for dissolution on or before 13 November 2013, with the next general election taking place shortly thereafter.

9. The new Constitution contains enhanced provisions for ensuring the independence of the judiciary from the legislative and executive organs of government. The judicial system comprises a Court of Appeal, a Supreme Court and such subordinate Courts (currently a Magistrates' Court and provisions for Coroner's Enquiries into sudden deaths) as may be established by Ordinance. There remains a final appeal to the Privy Council of the United Kingdom in prescribed circumstances.

10. Before the current Constitution Order of 2009, St. Helenian Councillor Tony Green, in a speech delivered at the Caribbean Seminar on Decolonization in St. Kitts and Nevis on 14 May 2009, said that the Islanders saw themselves as part of the United Kingdom and that the Territory strongly believed that it should not be categorized as a British Overseas Territory. He added that St. Helena wished to have a new partnership with the administering Power that might be modelled on St. Pierre et Miquelon, the French Overseas Territory. The new partnership, in his view, would be through constitutional change. He pointed out the need to clarify the relationship between St. Helena and its, then, two dependencies, Ascension Island and Tristan da Cuhna, and to ensure greater accountability by St. Helena's elected representatives for local affairs.[3]

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[2] *St. Helena Government, News*, http://www.sainthelena.gov.sh/news.php/38/new-constitution.

[3] See the decolonization website, www.un.org/Depts/dpi/decolonization.

III. Budget

11. Recurrent, operating expenditure in 2009/10 is budgeted at £21,046,253, an increase of 12 per cent from that of 2008/09. Of this, £8.7 million will be generated locally, an increase of 13 per cent compared to 2008/09. About half of this amount comes from income taxes, and customs and excise duties. The remaining £12.4 million of next year's revenue funding is composed of a number of grants from the Department for International Development (DFID). In addition, the Department has provided new funding (over and above that included in the budget estimates for 2009/10), of £1.56 million for high-priority infrastructure projects. A further £2.25 million will be channelled through St. Helena for work in Tristan da Cunha and Ascension Island.

12. The 2009/10 budget for St. Helena will be break-even. The largest items of expenditure are employee costs, which account for 34 per cent of the total, and payments to other agencies, which account for 29 per cent of the total. Within this category, the three largest items are the provision of social welfare benefits for the elderly, disabled and unemployed, the shipping subsidy, and the cost of services acquired with funding for technical cooperation. Both this and the shipping subsidy are fully funded by DFID. Supplies and services comprise the third largest category of expenditure, and its largest components are fuel, medical supplies and overseas medical treatment.[4]

IV. Economic conditions

A. Development

13. DFID has funded a major infrastructure review that has enabled a comprehensive plan to be developed identifying St. Helena's infrastructure requirements over the next 10 to 20 years. DFID and the St. Helena Government have agreed a set of performance-related indicators that provided £1.56 million in 2008/09 and will provide up to £3 million, depending on performance, in 2009/10.

14. According to the administering Power, a revision of the current three-year sustainable development plan is to be published in early 2010, reflecting a new policy framework with a number of objectives. The first aims at achieving a sustainable and vibrant economy through balanced public and private sector development, effective use of natural resources and human capital, and investment in physical infrastructure, including improved access to the island. The second goal is to establish a healthy community in a safe environment, paying particular attention to vulnerable groups, and ensuring culturally balanced social development. The third goal entails strengthening the community's institutions of governance, including in the areas of democracy, human rights and self-determination, engaging with a vibrant civil society on development issues, and modernizing the public sector.

15. St. Helena is eligible to receive funds from the European Union. The Territory's allocation from the tenth European Development Fund (2008-2013) is €16.63 million. St. Helena submitted a detailed bid for funding in December 2008,

[4] *Saint Helena Herald*, 4 April 2009.

asking for the development of a safer landing facility (including breakwater, slipway and sheltered landing area) and improved sea defences at James Bay, but has been unable to obtain compliant bids for the work listed above. The allocated funds are to be applied towards road rehabilitation, harbour improvements, upgrading of water, waste management and other capacity-building projects. A further rock-fall protection project, costing £2.25 million and funded by DFID, is currently under way and will be completed by mid/late 2010. This project is aimed at mitigating rock-falls from the cliffs above Jamestown and protecting the lives and property of its inhabitants.

16. In February 2009, a European Union-funded disaster management consultant visited St. Helena to consolidate the work on the capability review. The main objectives of the visit were to reorganize and invigorate the island Disaster Management Committee, develop medium-term disaster risk reduction strategies and develop comprehensive disaster plans. The consultant's recommendations are now being carried forward.

B. Agriculture and fisheries

17. Fisheries are an important sector in St. Helena's economy. There are a total of 29 fishing boats with commercial licences, but only a few of them fish regularly and it is a declining occupation. The local fishermen sell their catch to the St. Helena Fisheries Corporation. Fish purchases for the first half of the financial year 2009/10 was 306.1 metric tons compared to 241 during the same period of the previous year. The volume of fish exported during the period April to October 2009 was 149.4 metric tons compared to 113.9 over the same period of the previous year.

18. St. Helena has developed a reputation for the high quality of its coffee and fish. St. Helena's product is considered one of the finest premium coffees in the world. Owing to problems in the coffee sector, however, very little coffee has been exported recently. Its wild fish were the first to receive organic certification from the Soil Association, the leading campaigning and certification organization of the United Kingdom for organic food and farming.

19. The agricultural improvement scheme continued in 2009 and provided grants for pasture improvement and subsidies for the purchase of herbicides. It is anticipated that it will extend to grants for livestock housing, pasture management and arable production in future years.[3]

C. Transport, communications and utilities

1. General

20. Access to St. Helena is provided by the RMS *St. Helena*, which serves St. Helena, Ascension, Walvis Bay, Namibia and Cape Town, South Africa. The nearest airstrip is located on Ascension. Plans to construct an international airport on St. Helena were put on hold in December 2008. Prior to that, the airport was expected to become operational by 2011-2012. At that point, the United Kingdom Government would have withdrawn its subsidy from the RMS *St. Helena*, leaving it to the St. Helena Government to decide whether to retain the vessel in service.

21. St. Helena's only port, Jamestown, provides good anchorage, although it lacks safe landing facilities that would allow passengers of large cruise vessels to come ashore in all types of weather.

22. A public transport system run by the St. Helena Government has been in operation since 2003. St. Helena has approximately 122 kilometres of surfaced roads and 20 kilometres of dirt roads.

2. Airport

23. As previously mentioned, following extended consultation between the Government of St. Helena and DFID, it was announced in March 2005 that DFID would provide funding for the construction of an international airport on St. Helena. On 8 December 2008, however, DFID announced that the British Treasury and the Department were in continuing discussions about issues of concern regarding access to St. Helena and, as a result, there would be a pause in negotiations over the airport contract (see A/AC.109/2009/5, paras. 28-30).

24. In response to the announcement of a pause in negotiations over the airport, the Governor expressed concern that the pause would set back the development of St. Helena and the hopes of reducing dependency on its administering Power. The construction of an airport has been judged by feasibility studies to be necessary to enable the island to expand the local tourism market and stimulate economic development, which could lead to a reversal in population decline (ibid., para. 31).

25. In April-July 2009, the United Kingdom Government held consultations in St. Helena on the question of the airport. Out of more than 3,500 people who responded to the consultation, a strong majority thought that going ahead with an airport was the best option. In December 2009, the United Kingdom Secretary of State for International Development announced that after consideration of the outcome of the public consultation on air access for St. Helena, the conclusion had been reached that, given the prevailing economic conditions and the urgent requirements to protect vulnerable countries around the world from the impact of the global downturn, proceeding with the project would not be appropriate at the time. Meanwhile, he stressed the commitment of DFID to supporting the people of St. Helena. Instead of making a final decision at this juncture, therefore, the Department would conduct further analysis of two particular issues: (a) potential cost savings that might be enabled by recent technological developments; and (b) options for funding the capital cost of the airport through public-private partnership. DFID would also analyse further the costs and options for a replacement ship. The review might be expected to take about six months. The Director responsible for the Overseas Territories was expected to visit St Helena in the first quarter of 2010 to discuss this announcement with the Government and the private sector.

26. On 14 May 2009, at the Caribbean Seminar on Decolonization in St. Kitts and Nevis, Councillor Tony Green from the Territory reaffirmed the urgent need for the construction of an airport. According to him, any delay in its construction would have a serious impact on the Territory's economy, including its development, eco-tourism and the private sector.[5]

[5] *St. Helena Herald*, 29 May 2009.

D. Communications and utilities

27. In January 2008, broadband Internet access was introduced on St. Helena, and a total of 402 connections had been made at the end of December 2008. Under the DFID-funded Electricity Distribution Project,[3] work is under way to upgrade and extend the island's electricity distribution system. St. Helena's wastewater systems are also being upgraded under another DFID-funded project.

E. Tourism

28. The St. Helena Tourism Office awaits the endorsement of the recent report of the DFID Tourism Advisor so that agreed recommendations can be programmed for implementation. The report encourages a heritage-led tourism development as the future for the island. St. Helena tourism will focus on improving product development, services and marketing the island as a heritage destination. However, limited access and low fragmented visitor numbers will restrict tourism growth and business development. The recent pause on the airport decision will have a significant impact on projections for tourism potential. The average number of tourists arriving in St. Helena is approximately 2,000.

29. In 2008, a total of 1,181 and in 2009, 1,357 passengers from cruise ships landed at St. Helena. If the airport becomes operational and the landing facilities are improved, St. Helena could establish itself as a fly/cruise destination, which will encourage more visits from cruise ships. There is also potential for developing walking tours and sport fishing tourism on the island.

30. There is potential for growth in yachting tourism. In 2008, 147 yachts visited St. Helena and in 2009, to November, 186 yachts (711 crew) have called. However, investment will be required to improve the facilities currently offered to yachting visitors.

V. Social conditions

A. General

31. Measured by international norms, St. Helena is a middle-income country with few signs of real material poverty. This is largely the result of the all-encompassing government safety net, which guarantees everyone a minimum standard of living, and of social networks which encourage the distribution of income among kin, most notably in the form of remittances. During his meetings in London with DFID in August 2009, the Governor, among other things, brought up the need to ensure full funding of the public sector pensions paid out of the existing income, an arrangement which comes under an ever-increasing strain owing to the rise of the median age in the Territory.[6]

32. The ageing population of the Territory, with 22 per cent of the island over 65 years of age, has created an increasing need for substantial investment in a new elderly care programme. A new community care complex, Her Royal Highness the

[6] *St. Helena Herald*, 7 August 2009.

Princess Royal Community Care Centre, funded by DFID, was opened on 27 September 2008. The aim of the new care centre is to bring full-time residential care services under one roof instead of at the three current locations on the island. The centre provides residential care for 44 people. It was hoped that four of those places would be reserved for respite purposes; however, due to the increase in the numbers of elderly people needing full-time residential care, it has been necessary to fill the places permanently. In the meantime, an Elderly Care Unit at the General Hospital provides full-time care for five residents and offers respite to others in the community as and when necessary. There are currently (at December 2009) 437 people aged 65 and over who receive income-related benefits.

33. New policies and procedures have been developed and used in principle for child protection and safeguarding the welfare of children.

34. In January 2009, the Executive Council approved a new health and social services strategy for St. Helena, entitled "Focusing on the future", to guide the development of the Public Health and Social Services Department until 2012. DFID has agreed to inject almost £2 million into the project over its duration, subject to the achievement of certain milestones throughout its implementation. The project will focus on the six key areas: helping the population to be and to stay healthy; delivering high quality primary and community care; striving for the best possible clinical services; supporting children, older people and others who are vulnerable; sustaining a strong and effective infrastructure; and developing and improving systems and services within the Public Health and Social Services Department.[3]

35. There is one general hospital in Jamestown and five health clinics serving people living in rural areas. In addition, two units cater to clients with challenging behaviour problems and learning disabilities. Statistics of chronic health conditions affecting the population are diabetes, 11 per cent; hypertension, 21 per cent; cancer, 3.5 per cent; and asthma, 3 per cent.[1]

B. Employment

36. The public sector remains the dominant employer in the Territory. According to the administering Power, legislation has been drafted for provisions relating to employment and the rights of employees and to create a framework for the enforcement of such rights. These rights relate to a written statement of particulars; provision for working time regulations; unfair dismissal; entitlement to unpaid parental leave and unpaid leave to care for dependants; and provisions for a minimum wage.[1] The bill will be presented to the Legislative Council in 2010.

37. Offshore employment has steadily increased and, with it, remittances to the Territory. Approximately a quarter of the island's workforce is employed on Ascension, in the Falkland Islands or in the United Kingdom. Remittances passing through the Government of St. Helena Finance Department during 2008/09 amounted to £845,280, but this does not necessarily represent the total for that year, since direct transfers can be made to the Bank of St. Helena.

38. Offshore employment has led to significant social pressure associated with the dislocation of families since the majority of such contracts are for unaccompanied workers, and has drained the Territory of its trained staff. According to the St. Helena strategic review (2000-2010), remittances from offshore workers were

not sustainable and spelled out serious consequences if people were not put at the centre of development.[5]

39. According to the administering Power, in October 2008 the St. Helena Government embarked on a public service modernization programme. The programme will bring many changes which will allow greater efficiency and effectiveness. One of the first activities to be undertaken is a review of the pay and grading system which is designed to address the problem of staff attrition. In September 2008, the Public Service Orders were replaced by a code of management, which is underpinned by a set of detailed policies and procedures governing all aspects of employment relationships between St. Helena and its employees, with improved terms and conditions of service. The newly introduced Code of Management is seen as a living document and is subject to review on a regular basis.

C. Education

40. Education is compulsory and free for children between 5 and 16 years of age. There are currently four schools in operation, comprising three all-through primary schools (for pupils aged 3 to 11 years) and one secondary school for students aged 11 to 18 years. Post-compulsory-aged students opt for either United Kingdom-accredited academic or vocational courses.[7]

41. The Education Department is continuously addressing staff attrition issues, falling pupil rolls and enabling the greater use of existing resources in order to continue to improve educational standards. Retaining qualified, experienced staff continues to be a challenge. Since 2007, overseas territories citizens have qualified for the home student fee rate at English universities.

42. The Education Ordinance 2008 came into force on 30 August 2008. The Ordinance improved the legal framework for providing suitable education to children and also raised the compulsory schooling age from 15 to 16 years.

D. Environment

43. St. Helena has an environmental conservation programme aimed at preserving endangered species and the diversity of habitats. In September 2001, the United Kingdom and its territories adopted a set of environment charters setting out for the first time their mutual responsibilities regarding the environment. According to the administering Power, the St. Helena Government actively pursues compliance with its commitments under the Environment Charter but resource constraints have impeded progress in some areas.

44. In 2008, the Government of the United Kingdom approved two projects for St. Helena, supporting critical species recovery and horticultural needs. It also supported a small project implemented by the St. Helena National Trust to enable the islanders to conserve the island's wirebird. On Ascension Island, it approved an endemic plant conservation plan. In Tristan da Cunha, efforts will focus on the control of alien mice and plants at Gough Island World Heritage Site.

[7] See www.princeandrew.edu.sh.

VI. Relations with international organizations and partners

45. As a Non-Self-Governing Territory of the United Kingdom, St. Helena, Ascension Island and Tristan da Cunha are associated with, but not part of, the European Union.

VII. Ascension

A. General

46. Ascension was discovered by the Portuguese in 1501 and "found" again on Ascension Day in 1503 by Alphonse d'Albuquerque, who named the uninhabited island. Ascension covers an area of 90 square kilometres and is of volcanic origin.

47. In 1815, when Napoleon was a prisoner on St. Helena, a small British naval garrison was stationed on Ascension. The island remained under Admiralty supervision until 1922, when it was made a dependency of St. Helena. From then until 1964, the island was managed by the Eastern Telegraph Company (renamed Cable and Wireless in 1934). In 1964, in view of the plans to establish British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and Composite Signal Organization stations, an Administrator was appointed. During the Second World War, the United States Government built the Wideawake airstrip on the island. In 1957, a United States Air Force presence was re-established and the airstrip and ancillary facilities enlarged. It is now the south-east tracking station for the United States Air Force Eastern Test Proving Ground. In 1982, it became the intermediate stop for Royal Air Force flights to and from the Falkland Islands. In 2003, British and United States officials signed the Wideawake Agreement, which opened up the airstrip to civilian charter traffic. The Agreement was extended for a five-year period in 2008.

B. Constitutional and political status

48. As mentioned before, the new Constitution for the territory removed the notion that Ascension is a "dependency" of St. Helena; but the islands remain part of a single territory — sharing a Governor, Attorney General, and superior courts. The new Constitution enshrines protection of fundamental rights and freedoms and contains enhanced provisions to guarantee the independence of the judiciary from the legislative and executive organs of government.

49. For the first time, the existence of an Island Council is recognized in the Constitution, with detailed provision to be made by local ordinance. A new Council was elected in October 2008 and met regularly during 2009; a General Election is to be held before the end of 2010.

50. In September 2008, the United Kingdom submitted a claim to the United Nations Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, in respect of Ascension Island, for a continental shelf area beyond 200 nautical miles, in accordance with the provision set out in article 76 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.[3]

C. Economic and social conditions

51. Following a joint meeting in 2005 between the Foreign and Commonwealth Office/Ministry of Defence team and the Ascension Island Council regarding the right of abode and property ownership on Ascension, in January 2006, the United Kingdom Government decided that permanent right of abode and property ownership would not be granted. One of the main concerns for the United Kingdom Government was the tax liabilities that could fall on British taxpayers.[3] Legislation underpinning a land and business policy was enacted in June 2008, aimed at providing a clear and transparent means of determining the allocation and use of land as well as a framework for the operation of businesses on the island.

VIII. Tristan da Cunha

A. General

52. Tristan da Cunha island group is composed of four islands: the main island, Tristan da Cunha; Gough; Inaccessible; and Nightingale. Tristan da Cunha, a round volcanic island with an area of 98 square kilometres, is the most remote inhabited island in the world. Its closest neighbours are St. Helena, 2,334 kilometres to the north, and Cape Town, South Africa, 2,778 kilometres to the east. The only settlement on the island is the capital, Edinburgh of the Seven Seas. A team of South African meteorologists is based on Gough. Inaccessible and Nightingale are uninhabited.

53. Tristan da Cunha's entire population was evacuated to the United Kingdom for a period of 18 months when the volcano last erupted in 1961, but returned in 1963. Following a series of earth tremors in the summer of 2004, the British Geological Survey was engaged to monitor seismic activity, and provide regular reports, with a view to evacuation preparedness. The DFID-administered contract with the Survey ended in 2006 and was not renewed.

54. As at December 2004, the population of Tristan da Cunha consisted of 275 people divided into approximately 100 households.

B. Constitutional and political status

55. Executive authority for Tristan da Cunha is exercised by the Governor of St. Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha. A resident Administrator is appointed by and reports to the Governor. The Administrator is advised by an Island Council, led by the Chief Islander and comprising eight elected members (including at least one woman) and three appointed members. Elections are held every three years. All registered voters over 18 years of age are eligible to vote. Under the new Constitution (see section II above), the Governor continues to have legislative authority for Tristan da Cunha, but for the first time is constitutionally required to consult the Island Council before making any laws.

56. Tristan da Cunha has its own legislation, but St. Helena law applies to the extent that it is not inconsistent with local law. As a last resort, the laws of England

and Wales apply. There is one full-time police officer and two special constables. The Administrator also serves as the Magistrate.

C. Economic and social conditions

1. General

57. Tristan da Cunha's economy is based on traditional subsistence farming and fishing. Earnings from its lobster industry as well as sales of stamps, coins and souvenirs are used to fund health, education and other government services. Islanders also supplement their income by providing accommodation and guided tours to infrequent visitors and from retail and online sales of handicrafts and of souvenirs.[1]

58. According to information provided by the administering Power, over the last decade Tristan da Cunha has spent substantially more than it has earned because of inexperienced financial management, poor communication with London, and the proportionally high amount of capital expenditure needed to maintain such a remote and isolated community. There is continued pressure on the government budget relating to the cost of medical services, including offshore medical treatment for islanders. The Tristan economy also remains vulnerable to wider economic circumstances, including a recent fall in the price of lobster that Tristan da Cunha provides for the United States and Japanese markets, which led to a reduction of income from this sector in 2009.

59. A new Strategic Sustainable Development Plan drafted by the Island Council in early 2009 sets out broad strategies to secure the island's financial future, including plans to increase and broaden existing revenue sources, and to further reform the public service. The United Kingdom has funded two consultancies to support this work. Since 2008 the Tristan da Cunha Government has put a number of measures in place to raise government income and reform the public sector. Notable measures have included: enforced redundancy of all government staff of pensionable age; increased community charges for government service; introduction of medical charges and income tax; improved management of key contracts and department budgets; and increased retail margins.

60. Tristan da Cunha's primary source of income comes from fishing: rock lobster is sustainably fished and exported to the United States and Japanese markets. Tourism from occasional passing cruise ships, and the sale of commemorative coins and stamps, also brings the island significant income. Government income from these sectors is used to fund health, education and other government services. Islanders supplement their earnings by providing accommodation and guided tours to infrequent visitors and from the sale of handicrafts. Traditional small-scale farming is also an important part of life on the island.

2. Fisheries

61. Following the destruction by fire of the lobster processing plant on Tristan da Cunha in February 2008 and the collapse of the island's main cargo crane in April 2008, a new crane was sourced and installed in 2009 and a new plant was completed in July 2009.

3. Harbour rehabilitation, maritime service and tourism

62. Access to Tristan da Cunha is possible only by sea. The harbour can be used only when weather and sea conditions are suitable, with cruise ships often unable to land passengers. A DFID-funded contractor successfully completed some further rehabilitation work on Tristan's harbour in August 2009. This followed some emergency repairs performed by a Ministry of Defence joint task force in March 2008. It is anticipated that further European Development Fund money will become available in 2010 for more rehabilitation and maintenance work.

63. The harbour is not deep enough for visiting ships, so they must anchor offshore and offload passengers and cargo via small boats and rafts, weather permitting. That severely limits the potential for income from tourism. However, a handful of passing cruise ships do attempt to offload passengers each year. A tourism committee was formed in 2008 with a view to maximizing income in this area of tourism. Plans for online sales of souvenirs are also under way.[1] The United Kingdom is funding the construction of a new post office on the island. The building will host a number of tourism services which will generate additional income for the island.

64. Access is provided mainly by two vessels operated by the South African company Ovenstone, which holds the fishing concession for Tristan da Cunha lobster, and by the SS *Aghulas*, a South African research vessel which services their weather station on Gough Island. Between them they visit Tristan da Cunha 10 times a year, operating a passenger and freight service. The journey between Cape Town and Tristan da Cunha usually takes about seven days.

4. Communications

65. Following the installation of an improved telephone network early in 2007 Tristan da Cunha is now enjoying excellent inexpensive telecommunications with the outside world. The United Kingdom funds the line rental charge for this service. An Internet café offers islanders some limited access to the Internet. The Tristan da Cunha Government is planning to install a faster, more reliable Wi-Fi broadband system.

5. Health care and education

66. The DFID annual allocation (approximately £250,000) funds the health-care project on Tristan da Cunha (resident doctor plus annual dental and biennial optician visits), together with a modest training programme.

67. Since the United Kingdom Overseas Development Administration withdrew expatriate British teachers in the early 1990s, the education sector on Tristan da Cunha has been in decline, and the current standard is considered poor. Pupils leave school at age 16 and tend to work in government or the fishing sector. They have no opportunity to proceed to further education unless they go abroad. Teaching staff have very little training, and placement of trainee teachers is not foreseen. In September 2009, a DFID-sponsored education adviser began a two-year posting on the island. The Island Council judges that reform and improvement in this sector are key to a successful future.

6. Environment

68. Being isolated and devoid of all living organisms at its volcanic origin, the evolving flora and fauna of the island hold a special interest for scientists and

visitors. The Tristan Government is keenly aware of the need to live in balance with its environment because the economy of the community is dependent on sustainable harvests of lobster and fish. The Department of Natural Resources is responsible for administering the Island's strict environmental policies. More than 40 per cent of Tristan's territory is a declared nature reserve and Gough Island is a World Heritage Site. There are no indigenous terrestrial mammals, and much of Tristan Island's indigenous bird life was destroyed following the introduction of rats and mice in the 1880s. The islands of Nightingale and Inaccessible remain rodent-free and are home to several unique indigenous land birds. Continual education is required to safeguard this special environment.[8]

IX. Future status of the Territory

A. Position of the territorial Government

69. Information on political and constitutional developments regarding the status of St. Helena is reflected under section II.

B. Position of the administering Power

70. Information provided by the United Kingdom for inclusion in the Secretary-General's report of 23 April 2009 entitled "Implementation of decolonization resolutions adopted since the declaration of the First and Second International Decades for the Eradication of Colonialism" (A/64/70), inter alia, states that the United Kingdom policy towards the Overseas Territories "rests on the basis that it is the people of each Territory who determine whether they wish to stay linked to the United Kingdom or not. The United Kingdom has no intention of imposing independence against the will of the people concerned". Further, the statement referred to the suggestion by some commentators that the United Kingdom should agree to allow Territories the three status options set out in General Assembly resolution 1541 (XV), for removing Territories from the United Nations list, namely integration, independence, or free association. According to the United Kingdom, its policy was not to agree to integration, nor was there any indication that any of the Territories were seeking this. Its position on independence had already been set out. The concept of free association, as defined by the General Assembly, would mean that the Territory itself would draw up its Constitution free from the involvement of the United Kingdom, which would nonetheless retain all responsibility for the Territory, without the powers necessary to meet its responsibilities for the Territories. This was not a position the United Kingdom was willing to put itself in.

71. The United Kingdom further pointed out that General Assembly resolution 1541 (XV) was not legally binding and the United Kingdom had not voted in favour of the text. The United Kingdom Government indicated that it considered the existence of the Special Committee of 24 and the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories to be outdated, and remained of the view that none of its Overseas Territories should remain on the list.

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[8] United Kingdom Overseas Territories Conservation Forum, www.ukotcf.org/territories/tristan.htm.

72. In a statement made on 5 October 2009 at the 2nd meeting of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) during the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly (see A/C.4/64/SR.2, paras. 30-33), the representative of the United Kingdom said inter alia that where the people of any of its Overseas Territories clearly and constitutionally opted for independence, the United Kingdom would help them achieve it. Where, instead, a Territory wished to retain links, the United Kingdom would safeguard that Territory's future development and continued security, and would hold regular annual political consultations with it. Meanwhile, the respective territorial constitutions governed the relationship between the United Kingdom and its Overseas Territories and were regularly updated, carefully considering all proposals for constitutional change received from the Territories. A number of such new constitutions had come into force since 2006.

73. The United Kingdom stated that maintaining high standards of probity and governance was a cornerstone of British administration of the Territories. The United Kingdom Government was committed to allowing each Territory to run its own affairs responsibly as far as possible, but when developments in a Territory gave cause for concern or a Territory failed to fulfil international obligations, the United Kingdom would not hesitate to raise the matter with the territorial Government and intervene where necessary.

X. Action by the General Assembly

74. On 10 December 2009, the General Assembly adopted without a vote resolutions 64/104 A and B, based on the report of the Special Committee to the General Assembly[9] and its subsequent consideration by the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) (A/64/413). Section IX of resolution 64/104 B concerns St. Helena. Under the operative paragraphs of that section, the General Assembly:

> "1. *Welcomes* the entry into force of the Territory's new Constitution on 1 September 2009;
>
> "2. *Requests* the administering Power to assist the Territory by facilitating its work concerning public outreach efforts, consistent with Article 73 *b* of the Charter of the United Nations and, in that regard, calls upon the relevant United Nations organizations to provide assistance to the Territory, if requested;
>
> "3. *Requests* the administering Power and relevant international organizations to continue to support the efforts of the territorial Government to address the Territory's socio-economic development challenges, including unemployment, and limited transport and communications infrastructure;
>
> "4. *Notes* the decision by the administering Power to consult on whether an airport is the most appropriate option for access to Saint Helena in the current economic climate, and calls upon the administering Power to take into account the unique geographical character of Saint Helena in the process of consultation."

[9] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 23* (A/64/23).